Lafayette Historical Society
POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE, CALIF. 94549

President:
Bill Somerton
284-9785

NEWSLETTER

Lafayette, California | August, 1997 | Vol. 24, No. 3

BASEBALL HISTORY In LAFAYETTE!

LHS Program: Dick Dobbins—September 16, 1997

Take Me Out to the Ball Game

Our speaker for this September evening program is a Baseball historian and one of the few acknowledged experts on the old Pacific Coast League, or PCL. Mr. Dobbins is a consultant to the SF Giants, the National Baseball Museum and Hall of Fame, and is the owner of San Francisco Giants Memorabilia. In his spare time he has co-authored a history of professional baseball in the bay area from the gold rush days to the present. The book is titled Nuggets on the Diamond.

A LAFAYETTE BASEBALL TEAM FROM THE PAST. Front row, l to r: Merle Daley, Ted McVean, unidentified, Pete Thomson. Center: John Weldon(dark suit). Back row, l to r: Albert "Bum" Lamp, Lou Dore, Lloyd Brown, Herb Daley, unidentified. From the Lafayette Historical Society Archives.

September Program: Take Me Out to the Ball Game

Date:	Tuesday, September 16, 1997
Time:	7:00 P.M. Refreshments
	7:30 P.M. Short business session
Speaker:	Dick Dobbins Take Me Out To The Ball Game
Location:	Lafayette Christian Church
	584 Glenside Drive, Lafayette
Price:	$5.00 (to help defray LHS expenses)
Questions:	Call Keith Blakeney, 284-2221

Mr. Dobbins retired from teaching at Acalanes High School and soon after began an intense four years of serious research with his co-author Jon Twitchell. Interviews with players from the old Seals and Oaks teams, even down to the bat boys, are a highlight of their work.

If you ever sat in the sun with a hot dog and lemonade at a PCL game this meeting is for you... and if you are too young, or lived where there was no PCL, then make up for what you missed. Mr. Dobbins is well known in our community and highly regarded as a lively, humorous and interesting speaker. You won't want to miss him. So, join us September 16 and once more hear the call of...PLAY BALL.

President's Message

It has been an eventful spring and summer for the Historical Society. The Annual Meeting was well attended with a most interesting speaker giving some new insights (for me, at least) on the principal characters in the 1849 California gold rush.

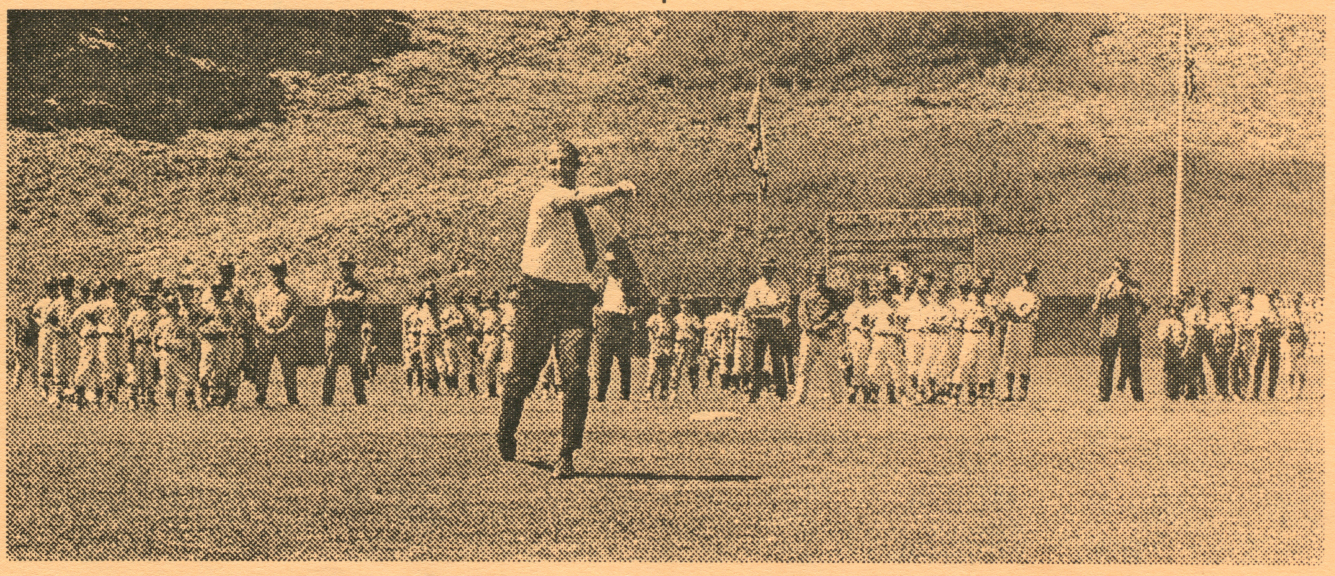
We were represented at the Lafayette "4th of July in the Park" with a booth and display and our 1919 fire engine "Old Betsy". We were also represented at the Concours d'Elegance again with Old Betsy.

Did you see the fine article in the Contra Costa Sun, featuring Old Betsy and George Wasson? The need for a Lafayette Historical Museum was highlighted. We are working on this and hope to come up with a proposal in the near future.

The sesquicentennial on the settling of Lafayette in 1848 will occupy much of our attention in the coming months. You may be called upon to assist in this major endeavor. You will be informed of the many opportunities to help in this year-long celebration.

I am very honored to serve as your President for another year. Please let me know of any of your concerns and your suggestions to help the Society grow in the coming year.

—by Bill Somerton, President



BASEBALL AND POLITICS! Hizzonor, Lafayette Mayor Bob Fisher, throws out the first ball for the 1970 Little League season. From the Lafayette Historical Society Archives.

"Old Betsy" Visits the Concours

Lafayette's 1919 Model T Ford Fire Engine was at the 4th of July city celebration, and Concours d'Elegance for all to see. Front end fenders, hood and radiator cover are all newly painted, with new oak running boards fitted throughout. A request for support donations at the Concours produced about $12 in coins and bills.

As with other projects in this restoration, it is the assistance of friends with skills and tools who get the job done. In the case of the running boards, a long time friend and former resident of Lafayette—Roger Peterson—brought his power tools and his ability to work with wood to the job. It took most of a Saturday to put the fenders in place and cut the oak boards to fit the spaces. He later made a new battery box to mount on one funning board. The next part of that project is a finish for the wood.

We have also acquired a bell which is mounted on the bell support arbor. The bell came from a service club in Oakland and to us from Hub Anderson—formerly of Lafayette and now a resident at Rossmoor. Hub has contributed greatly to the fire engine project in time and knowledge on how a model-T works. We should name the bell "The Hub Anderson Bell".

I hope you saw the pictures in the Contra Costa Sun and the Contra Costa Times showing the fire engine and Keith Blakeney [program chair] in stories about the need for storage and display space for historical items. When we finish with the fire engine it will be worthy of prominent display!

—by George Wasson, Keeper of the Fire Engine

Oral History Update

Under the leadership of Jop Van Overveen, many of the Society's oldest taped oral history interviews have been copied on to compact discs (CDs), and there are plans to do the same with the old cassette recordings. This has been very exciting and has renewed the interest in oral history

As a part of this renewed interest, a committee on oral history has recently been formed. We hope to continue with taped interviews, and to explore new ways of gathering the personal memories of Lafayette's citizens. We would like your suggestions of possible interviewees. Or, perhaps, you have a personal story to tell! We also need people to record and transcribe interviews. If you have any suggestions or would be willing to help in any way, please give me a call at 283-3409.

—by Nancy Flood, Oral Historian

June Program— Lafayette History Buffs Meet with John Muir

The weather was beautiful on the morning of June 14 as we met at the Lafayette Veterans Building. All signals were "go" for a great trip to the John Muir Historical Mansion in Martinez. Once there, we met our docent, David Blackburn, National Park Service Ranger and Chief Interpreter, who conducted our tour of the main house. The old Victorian has been lovingly restored to authentic condition. It is furnished with period furnishings, although few of them belonged to John Muir.

A couple of observations: we noticed the kitchen stove was huge by today's standards. (Muir must have done a lot of entertaining.) Next to the stove was a framed photo of the cook.

On the second floor we saw John Muir's study arranged just the way he always had it; a real mess with documents piled and scattered all around the floor.

From the attic we were able to climb into the tower on the roof (sometimes called the Widow's Walk) from which we had a 360 degree view, for miles around.

Following our tour of the house, we adjourned to the picnic area in a beautiful apricot orchard between the main house and the Martinez Adobe. It was a delightful spot and the weather couldn't have been more pleasant. We spread our ample feast on a table and ate buffet style. In about half

JOHN MUIR TELLS IT LIKE IT IS. Steve Pauley, Pleasant Hill resident and Board member of the John Muir Memorial Association, helps LHS tour participants understand Muir's legacy. Photo courtesy of Mary Powell

an hour, we noticed an older gentleman working his way in our direction, stopping to check the ripe fruit on the trees as he came. When he got closer, we realized this was actually our host, John Muir. We made introductions all around and asked him to tell us about his earlier life, and experiences as a great conservationist. He was very accommodating and went on at considerable length.

He told us he had emigrated with his family from Dunbar Scotland in 1838 at the age of 11. He didn't get on well with his father, so left home at the age of 22, attending the Univ. of Wisconsin for 2½ years. From 1863 to 1868 he traveled on foot extensively throughout the US, Canada and Cuba. He then took a ship to San Francisco and on foot again, traveled to the Sierras where he lived for five years, primarily in Yosemite.

In 1874 he met the Strentzel family in the Alhambra Valley of Martinez. Dr. Strentzel had extensive orchard holdings in and around the Alhambra Valley. Six years later Muir, 42, and Louie Strentzel, Dr. Strentzel's daughter, were married. After two more trips to Alaska Muir settled down to a long period of serious ranching. He was very successful in this endeavor, financially and as a botanist and pioneer in agricultural land use.

The thing which defined John Muir as a great American, however, was his career as a conservationist at a time when America was committed to a devastating attack on the environment. By the end of his career, however, the U.S. was pursuing a policy of preservation of our natural resources, in spirit if not always in fact.

Muir's writings moved presidents and politicians as well as plain Americans to action. His influence with Presidents Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt played a direct roll in the creation of the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, dedication of 148 million acres to the Forest Reserves, 5 National Parks and 23 National Monuments. Muir also helped found the Sierra Club of which he was president for life.

John Muir was wonderfully portrayed by Steve Pauley of Pleasant Hill, engineer and owner of Digital Technology which designs and builds earthquake instruments. Mr. Pauley is on the board of the John Muir Memorial Association which is launching a project to fund and build a new $2½ million Visitors and Education Center at the site.

After our talk with John Muir, we had an opportunity to tour the Vicente Martinez adobe. This building was on the property when acquired by Strentzel. It was built in 1849, during the Mexican era, and is the oldest building in the vicinity.

—by Keith Blakeney, Program Chair

Dues Reminder!

Please look at the mailing label on this newsletter. If you see a * (asterisk) near your name, our membership list indicates your dues have not been paid for 1997. In this case, please make your check payable to Lafayette Historical Society, and mail it to P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, CA 94549. Do it today!

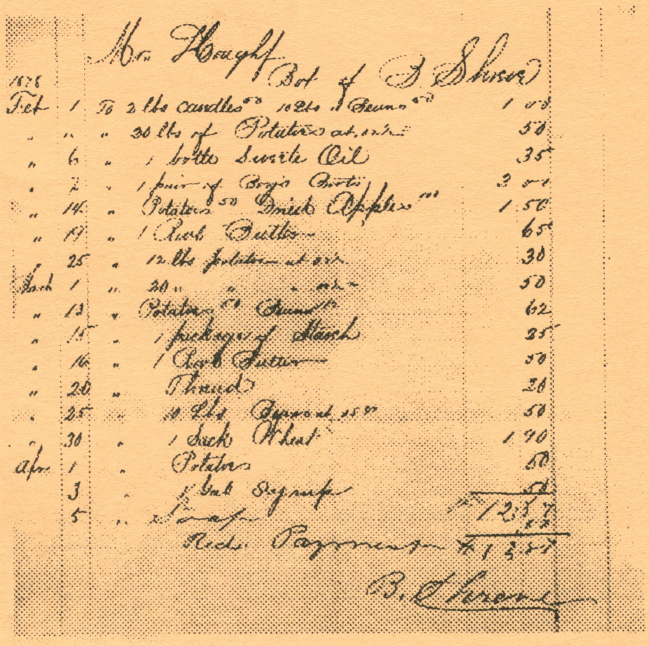
–by Ollie Hamlin

Lafayette Pioneers— BENJAMIN SHREVE

[Ed. Note: This article was provided by Ray Peters, to help us refresh our memories about Lafayette's pioneers, as next year's sesquicentennial celebration approaches.]

This well-known pioneer of Contra Costa county was born in Crawford county, Pennsylvania, August 2, 1828, and there received his education, in part, at the common schools, and afterwards at the Waterford academy. In 1850, he went to the southern portion of Kentucky, where he was employed in teaching school. In 1852, he started from Smithland, in company with a party of Kentuckians, to cross the plains to California, and after an uneventful trip of six months, arrived at Placerville, in September of the same year, and later in the Fall, came to Contra Costa county, where he stayed for a short time in Ygnacio valley. He then proceeded to Oregon, where he remained until May, 1853, when he returned to the mines on the Middle Fork of the American river. After a short stay there he concluded to return East, and started for San Francisco with that intention, but passing through Contra Costa county he was employed to teach school, near Lafayette, and taught there during the Winters of 1853 and '54, and in 1855, began the merchandise trade near his present place of business, in connection with which he ran a hotel. In 1857, Mr. Shreve petitioned Congress to establish a post office at his place, and then gave it the name of Centerville, but owing to there being a post-office of the same name in the State, had to change it, when he named it after the great French General, Lafayette. Mr. Shreve then moved his store some half-mile farther up the valley, to where now stands the town of Lafayette, and in 1857, received his appointment as postmaster and mail agent, which office he still holds, it being now his twenty-fourth year of the trust, being probably one of the oldest postmasters in the State. In connection with his post-office and store, he farms a ranch of two hundred and fifty acres adjoining the town. Was united in marriage in Lafayette, August 17, 1854, to Miss Adeline Gorham, a native of Illinois. By this union they have two children: Milton and Fred.

(From History of Contra Costa County, W.A. Slocum & Co., 1882.)



BILL Of SALE, Benjamin Shreve's store. From February into April, 1878, Mr. "Houghf" bought $12.87 in merchandise from Mr. Shreve. It is thought that "Houghf" may be a misspelling of Hough. From the Lafayette Historical Society Archives.

Sesquicentennial Logo Finalists Announced by 150th Anniversary Committee

Lafayette, CA.— A five member panel of judges selected the Lafayette Sesquicentennial Celebration's logo from twenty extremely creative entries. Three finalists will be honored and the winning design will be unveiled at the Sesquicentennial Announcement Luncheon on Friday, September 19, 1997.

The three finalists are (in alphabetical order) Carsten Bekker, Bekker Studios, San Ramon; Robert Burns IV of Moraga; and Jack Jackson, Square Peg Graphics in Oakland. All 20 of the entries will be displayed with credits at the luncheon. Gary Albright of Albright & Price Design for Advertising; Bev Britton the Managing Editor of the Contra Costa Sun; Ann Grodin, Honorary Chair of the Sesquicentennial Committee and Vice-Mayor of Lafayette; John Hopper of Crea-

tive Concepts; and Bill Wakeman of The Lafayette Historical Society were the judges.

The selection of a winner was very difficult due to the professional quality and creativity of the entries. All of the entrants are to be commended for their excellent designs. Keith Blakeney, Sesquicentennial Committee Chairman, wished that all of the entries could be used. Anastasia Amaral, Logo Chairperson, hosted the judging at her studios. Bill Wakeman cited the historical merits of the designs down to the use of oxen (and one cow) to pull the 14 wagons from the east to Lafayette. If you want the whole story, ask him at the luncheon.

The luncheon will be held at The Lafayette Park Hotel. The public is invited and reservations must be made prior to 9/12/97. Luncheon and event is $25 per person. Call 284-2221 for information and reservations.

Since Sesquicentennial events are for the benefit of the Lafayette Historical Society; we urge you to support as many of these events as possible.

—by Keith Blakeney

Board of Directors Actions

June, 1997 meeting—

1996-97 officers were re-elected unanimously for the 1997-98 term. Please see the list of Board members on the inside back cover for names of our officers.

Paul Sheehan, Treasurer, will establish a separate checking account for the Sesquicentennial celebration. All income for this project, whether from the City, Chamber of Commerce, LHS, or proceeds of events will go through this account, and expenses will be paid from the account.

The Board approved, subject to review of final plans, construction of a small lift on the Town Hall for handicapped access to the 2nd floor theater. The lift will be attached to the outside of the north wall, next to the existing outside stairway. The lift is mandated by federal access laws.

Marechal Duncan reported the City has contributed $1,000 to the Society in support of our activities.

The Board approved contributing $100 to the United Methodist Church in recognition of its assistance to the walking tours program. Students taking the tour have the chance to ring the historic bell in the Church's bell tower.

BENJAMIN SHREVE'S STORE, c. 1870's. Reproduction of a tintype. The store building is located at 3535 Plaza Way. No photo of Shreve has been identified, but he may be the central figure, standing in front of the door to the store. From the Lafayette Historical Society Archives.

1996/97 Board of Directors and Committee Chairs

Board of Directors

Bill Somerton, President . . 284-9785
Nancy Flood,Vice President . . 283-3409
Paul Sheehan, Treasurer . . . 284-1287
Ruth Dyer, Recording Secretary 283-8312
Oliver Hamlin, Corresponding Secretary . . 283-6822
Keith Blakeney 284-2221
Marechal Duncan 283-6812
Ray Peters 283-5256
Tom & Janice Crosetti Titmus . 299-2030
Joseph Van Overveen 283-3650
Bill Wakeman 283-3908
Gary Willcuts 283-0706

Committee Chairs

Annual Potluck Dinner, Richard Johnson 283-0199
Archives & Historical Displays, Bill Somerton 284-9785
Book Sales, Ruth Dyer . . . 283-8312
Fire Engine, George Wasson . 284-4603
Historian, Bill Wakeman . . . 283-3908
LHS Online, (vacant) . . . . . .
Membership, Oliver Hamlin . 284-1446
Newsletter, Gary Willcuts . . 283-0706
Newsletter Mailing, Ruby & James Sturman 283-1250
Oral Historian, Nancy Flood . 283-3409
Plaza Park, Ray Peters . . . 283-5256
Programs, Keith Blakeney . . 284-2221
Publicity, Tom & Janice Crosetti Titmus . . . 299-2030
Walking Tours, Bill Wakeman 283-3908

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Lafayette Historical Society

MEMBER INFORMATION

(For multiple names/addresses, please photocopy this form.)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone: _____ Daytime phone: _____

Membership Categories and annual dues (please check one):

_____ Student membership $ 2.50
_____ Family membership $ 10.00
_____ Business membership $ 50.00
_____ Life membership $100.00

Make check payable to **Lafayette Historical Society** and mail to P.O. Box 133, Lafayette, California 94549

DUES $_____

Contribution to fire engine maintenance $_____

TOTAL ENCLOSED $_____

Please indicate your areas of special interest:

_____ Annual Dinner Committee
_____ Displays
_____ Newpaper Clippings
_____ Programs & Trips
_____ Walking Tours
_____ Archives
_____ Fire Engine
_____ Oral History
_____ Research
_____ Other _____
_____ Computers
_____ Landmarks
_____ Photograph Collection
_____ Telephone Committee

LHS CALENDAR

Board of Directors Meeting—Open to all members

Date/Time	**Tuesday, September 9, 1997, 7:30 PM**
Place	1343 Martino Rd., Lafayette

September Program—Take Me Out to the Ball Game

Date/Time	Tuesday, September 16, 1997, 7 PM
Place	Lafayette Christian Church

Sesquicentennial Logo Anouncement Luncheon

Date/Time	Friday, September 19, 1997
Place	Lafayette Park Hotel
Reservations	284-2221, by September 12

Deadline for LHS Newsletter Articles

Articles to Gary Willcuts by Monday, January 5, 1998

Send to: willcuts@ccnet.com

Anyone interested in obtaining information about activities of, or membership in, the Lafayette Historical Society is invited to contact Oliver Hamlin, 283-6822.

Lafayette Historical Society
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